

## Running Questions & Comments – RSU 24 Withdrawal Received from e-mail inquiry

Questions I have:

For years Lamoine children, once getting into high school, have struggled trying to get 'caught up' with Ellsworth/MDI students because they did NOT receive the same opportunities in middle school. I thought that one purpose of the RSU was to help 'equalize' the education our children are getting. How would pulling out of the RSU benefit our students? Especially with the history the Town of Lamoine has in giving the school the absolute minimal financial support? I guess my question is two part: (1) how will pulling out of the RSU benefit our children's educations, and (2) how will it benefit the town?

Name (optional): Chrystine Emeigh

Questions:

Would this be helpful financially for the town?

Will it give the town more say in what programs and classes are offered?

Will it facilitate the work of the Advisory Board and other school staff and administrators?

Most importantly, can it lead to improving the quality of the schooling the students receive?

Comments:

On the face of it this seems like a good idea, since the whole consolidation issue was forced on the towns of this state, and one can only hope that a smaller group of towns would lend itself to more town control, better quality.

Annie Crisafulli

- What are the Pros & Cons for remaining within the RSU as well as leaving
- Keep the answers short and to the point on both
- What are the recommendations of the school committee?
- Keep the recommendations brief and to the point

Suggestion, please produce the Pros & Cons along with the school committees recommendations all on one sheet of paper.

Thanks, Ronald A. Madore

Questions:

Why are we looking into withdrawing AND forming a new entity with Hancock?

Should we not withdraw and look at all possibilities? With and without Hancock? Shouldn't we get the best deal available?

Comment:

It could be beneficial to look into all avenues. Our sister town, Trenton, is thriving in the AOS @ MDI. They have complete school choice and still have their school committee with complete control over their grammar school. We drew the "short straw" in the RSU now let us get control of our students education and school. Having Ellsworth in control has not worked as they are looking for ways to cut costs by eliminating programs and next is cutting schools. Enough is enough !

Griff Fenton

I think consolidating schools is a smart economic idea.

I often see nearly empty school buses and I know those vehicles are not cheap to maintain and that gas mileage must be low.

I seem to recall that the cost to educate each child is around \$10,000. Is that right? That's a HUGE cost. Seems like that money would be better spent elsewhere, e.g. computers, software, outdoor equipment, even textbooks!

Thanks.

Liz Weston

Questions I have:

How will this impact my taxes? I do not want to pay more in school taxes. Enough is enough.

Comments I have:

My taxes have doubled since I have lived here in the past 9 years. It seems foolish to keep raising taxes for a school with a diminishing student population. Taxes are so high now that the people who COULD have children to fill the school cannot afford to move here. Just doesn't make sense.

Yes, I am retired now. I live on a meagre fixed income. Some (of you) have made it sound like a dirty word R E T I R E E . Just wait until it's you. Then the story will change. I worked hard all my life and paid my dues. Now it is my time to relax. No I am not a wealthy 'from away' resident. I am from away but I pay my own way and always have. I pay my taxes just like (you) and deserve the right to peaceful enjoyment of my retirement years.

Name (optional):

I do not want to be named unless everyone is identified.

[REDACTED]

6 Questions:

1. Who will the new administrator/superintendent be and what will his/her salary be?
2. What is the direct operating cost of the Lamoine School now?
3. What is the actual expense of leaving the RSU including legal fees?
4. Where will the administration for the new school system be located and under whose control?
5. What are the stated objectives in leaving the RSU?
6. What are the gains and benefits of having a new school system and what will be used to determine if and when those benefits have been realized?

Comments I have:

I am generally in favor of the departure from the RSU. However, I am concerned about the follow-on program, who will be administering it, and how the town will conduct oversight.

Name : Aija Kante & Frederick H. Cahn

Are the two public meetings at Town Hall?

(Carol Duffy)

I want the less expensive option! I have cut back everywhere and ...like so many others... can not afford to support other peoples children! Please be clear to ALL of us what the actual increase to our taxes will be.

Thank you - Amy Guilan

Thanks for the inquiry. What are the financial implications and what is the assessment of the impact on the quality of education for the students? Could you post the minutes of school board meetings or guide me to the place I might find them on the website. When is the final vote? Thanks. Barbara Peppey

I personally never understood why Lamoine chose to go with Ellsworth in the RSU decision anyway. I do not claim to know what the solution is but I definitely think looking at other options would be a better choice for Lamoine. As a parent I think our small school provides much more to our children than combining with a larger school and there were definitely rumors about our school closing which I greatly opposed. As a taxpayer in the town the state promised benefits (tax breaks) never came. I do not ever expect my taxes to go down, although that would be wonderful, but I expected many more benefits for our school that just never came to light. I look forward to seeing what this inquiry will bring for the people and students of Lamoine. Dianna Taylor

Questions re: RSU 24 Withdrawal  
From: Stu Marckoon

1. What system-wide opportunities exist for K-8 students in RSU 24 that are not contained within the walls of the Lamoine Consolidated School?
2. What will the cost be to "purchase" the Lamoine Consolidated School back from RSU 24?
3. What will the cost be to reimburse RSU 24 for the amount of debt service that the entire RSU has assumed from the Lamoine Consolidated School renovation project in the past 3-years, and when is payment expected?
4. Will the business manager/accountant be preparing all the bill payment warrants if a new AOS is formed, and if not, will that task fall on the current town office staff?
5. What penalty might exist under state funding law for pulling out of RSU 24.
6. What are the MEA test scores for the past 5-years for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade?
7. How will curriculum coordination be accomplished within a new AOS?
8. How, under the question proposed, is the town expected to raise and appropriate the funding to pay for the amount pledged by the Selectmen for the RSU withdrawal planning process (i.e., how can the proposed \$15,000 be funded?).
9. Does the town's education fund balance carry forward or must that be turned over to RSU 24 if withdrawal is approved.
10. If there are existing contracts for teachers, bus transportation, heating oil, etc. that cover present operations at LCS, who will administer those contracts, and is Lamoine liable for its share of the contract if withdrawal proceeds?
11. What structure would exist for interscholastic activities such as soccer, basketball, cross country, cheering, baseball and softball?

12. What happens to the “personal property” of the school (i.e. desks, chairs, supplies etc.) that were “purchased” by the RSU?

Questions I have:

What are the differences in funding between being in the RSU and being out?

What are the other differences-academics, athletics, music, extracurricular activities?

Comments I have: I think we should have the power as a town to make decisions regarding our school. I fear that what is good for the RSU is not always good for our small school. I am looking forward to hearing more information at these meetings.

Name (optional): Jackie Haines

Questions I have: Will It save money? How do we know that the other small towns will vote to withdraw from RSU24 so Lamoine can join with them?

Comments I have: Because of the funding formula, Lamoine will be a minimum receiver of state funds. Also, it will cost to set up and operate a central office. The building debt on the Lamoine school that is now being paid for by all the towns of the RSU will be the total responsibility of Lamoine taxpayers.

The law allows for withdrawal from an RSU, but still requires that the town then join in with another RSU or ASU or create a new ASU with other towns. There are major requirements that go along with organizing an ASU such as where will your student go to high school!

Caution, be sure of your sources of information.

Name (optional): Henry Ashmore

What would be the difference in cost?

How would this affect extracurricular programs such as art and music, etc.?

(Doug Jones)

#### Residential taxpayer Richard E. Fennelly, Jr. Questions & Comments

- 1) **What is the documented academic achievement of Lamoine students for the three year period prior to joining RSU 24 and the period since joining RSU 24?** My understanding from David Bridgham is that it has improved since joining the RSU.
- 2) **What is the documented/quantified cost of education to Lamoine students for the three year period prior to joining RSU 24 and the period since joining RSU 24?** My review of Lamoine Town Reports, tax commitment for education and State EPS funding considered, indicates that the Town of Lamoine spends an average of approx. \$250,000/year less for education since joining the RSU than it did for the three year period prior to joining the RSU, when adjusted for inflation. David Bridgham stated his belief that the savings are better than \$300,000/year. No, we may not be paying for the same things on a “before” and “after” comparison but I am asking to simply compare the cost. Keep in mind that no State EPS funding will be available if we withdraw from the RSU and “go it alone” so one needs to include State EPS and Town tax commitment dollars for the period prior to joining the RSU to compare to what our cost may be if we

withdraw, and that does not include additional costs associated with withdrawing from the RSU nor does it include an increase in costs that some may wish to incur for things like adding music and phys ed instruction.

- 3) Is the Local School Advisory dissatisfied with the course curriculum being provided by the RSU?** Brett Jones, RSU Board representative for Lamoine and Chair of the Lamoine Local School Advisory Committee, stated unequivocally at a recent Lamoine Board of Selectmen meeting that there are no complaints with the curriculum. His was a responsive answer to a question asked by Selectman Bill Brann if there are any complaints about the course curriculum.

It seems abundantly clear to me that:

- Lamoine students are demonstrating better academic achievement since Lamoine joined the RSU;
- Lamoine taxpayers are spending less for education since joining the RSU; and
- The Lamoine RSU Board representative and Lamoine Local School Advisory Committee are not dissatisfied with the course curriculum.

Given these three summary points, what **IS** the motivation for withdrawing from the RSU? Our students are doing better...we are saving money...and we are satisfied with the course curriculum. That sounds to me like a recipe for satisfaction. And that leads me to my last two questions:

- 4) If there is a desire to improve things at the Lamoine elementary school, why doesn't the Lamoine Local School Advisory Committee ("LSAC") develop a priced proposal to place before the voters to see if they might support programs, or recommendations that are above and beyond those provided by the RSU?** The State legislation specifically provided for the ability of LSAC's to develop, and place before their Town Meeting, recommendations for "improvements" above and beyond RSU-provided programs that the Town may vote to fund. I don't see the need to withdraw from the RSU to arrange for improved programs and offerings...if the Town wants those things, they can fund them and still remain an RSU member.
- 5) Does the Town of Lamoine wish to withdraw from the RSU and face the risk and exposure of potentially appreciable costs associated with "special needs" students?** Those costs and exposures are currently spread across all RSU member municipalities and the potential financial impact to any one municipality is thereby reduced.

In summary, it is my opinion that withdrawal from the RSU is premature and can only be financially more demanding of Lamoine taxpayers than remaining a member of the RSU. The RSU has not yet had sufficient time to "hit a stride"...it is still young and finding its way. I strongly believe it is better to remain a member of the RSU and seek Town funding through our LSAC at Town Meeting for desired "improvements". We have school choice today, our student academic achievement has improved, taxpayer cost to fund education is reduced, course curriculum is satisfactory, there is a mechanism in place to seek Town funding for "improvements" beyond programs and offerings that the RSU provides, and we have reduced risk and exposure to potentially expensive costs related to "special needs" students. I cannot support withdrawal for all of these reasons.

Comments I have: **I want what's best for the students & teachers.**

(From Enid Neleski)

#### Question for Lamoine School Advisory Committee

The Lamoine School Advisory Committee was formed June 24, 2009 by an ordinance approved at the 2009 Town Meeting. One of the stated Committee mandates was to: "Develop, if needed, a budget for additional Education funding". In the past three years, what specific budgets for additional Education funding have been submitted in writing to the Lamoine Budget Committee and/or Select Board for inclusion as warrant items for a vote at the Lamoine Town Meeting? What written proposals have been submitted to the RSU 24 Board by the RSU 24 Lamoine Board Representative for additional Education programs and services to be paid as a supplement beyond the RSU 24 Lamoine contribution? What were the written responses by the RSU 24 Board or Superintendant to these proposals.

As I will be unable to attend either of the Public Hearings I would like a written answer to my question.

Thank you very much,

Catherine de Tuede  
45 Meadow Point Rd.  
Lamoine, ME 04605  
[detuede@roadrunner.com](mailto:detuede@roadrunner.com)

Questions I have:

The big question is what do we gain by scuttling a structure already in place? What will it cost us in taxes and in overall disruption of a system that may just need more testing? I see Stueben declined to leave the RSU.

Comments I have:

I hope this is not primarily a reaction to Baldacci and the "top down" issue. Surely there should have been a better involvement process, but don't let process be the deciding factor. That has been the major complaint I've heard so far.

It would help to have a set of points pro and con the RSU. People talk about the one or two issues they care most about, but I've seen no dispassionate factual listing of the benefits and burdens of staying with the RSU. There must be some economies of scale in administration and services not realized in a town by town approach to education.

Name (optional): Larry Libby

Questions I have:

1. What will it cost us; i.e. how much more than now?
2. What alternatives do we have? E.g., Joining Hancock
3. What cost-saving measures have been achieved under RSU?

(submitted by Lynda Tadema-Wielandt)

More from Stu Marckoon:

1. If this question passes, how are the Selectmen supposed to come up with the money to fund this (\$15,000)? The question reads as follows per statute: *Do you favor filing a petition for withdrawal with the board of directors of regional school unit 24 and with the Commissioner of Education, authorizing the withdrawal committee to expend \$15,000.00 and authorizing the Board of Selectmen to issue notes in the name of the Town of Lamoine or otherwise pledge the credit of the Town of Lamoine in an amount not to exceed \$15,000.00 for this purpose?* There has been no budget provision made for this. The article does not “raise and appropriate” this amount, so I would question whether it could legally come from the tax commitment. My guess is that you would have to call a special town meeting following a successful vote to raise and appropriate that money; and this would have to be held quickly, before the tax commitment. I’d like to contact MMA Legal on that.
2. If this passes and a new plan is developed for an AOS, and that passes, what is the mechanism to fund this to get up and running by the end of the school year? We cannot do a special property tax commitment once the commitment is made, and there is no budget for this, because the costs won’t be known for many weeks into the planning process. This is one of those things that may be putting the cart before the horse, but I’m really curious on how this process would work.
3. One question I asked last night is more of a minutiae thing – and that was how tuition would be calculated in RSU 24 should Lamoine pull out. Would the RSU calculate the cost for the high school and divide that by the number of students remaining in the RSU towns and the state tuition rate be based on that? That would significantly jump the cost per student for high school tuition. Using hypothetical numbers, let’s say RSU 24 currently has 800 students at the 2 schools and it costs \$8-million dollars to run Ellsworth and Sumner. That translates to a cost of \$10,000 per student (Remember, these are made up numbers). Let’s assume that 35 of those students are Lamoine students. If we pull out, the \$8-million cost would be divided by 735, increasing the cost to \$10,884 per student. Obviously, this is something that any withdrawal committee would have to explore.